The Cochin Marumakkathayam Bill.

Mr. P. Kumaran Ezhuthassan *(Wadakkancheri).*—I beg to move that the Cochin Marumakkathayam Bill be taken up and finally passed.

Mr. E. Ikkanda Warriar *(Urakam).*—I second it.

Motion was put and carried.

The Cochin Maternity Benefit Bill.

† **Dr. Mrs. G. M. D'Souza Williams** *(Nominated).*—Mr. President, Sir, I move that the Cochin Maternity Benefit Bill may be read in Council. In doing so, I would like to bring to the attention of the Hon'ble Members the urgent need for a social legislation of the kind.

Our State is rapidly getting industrialised with the result that we have today 71 factories employing 1170 women workers. These figures have been supplied to me by the Inspector of Factories and Boilers and I may be taken as correct. With the increased facilities for industries there will be a further increase in the number of factories and consequently in the number of women workers.

The Hon'ble Members of this House will remember that some time back this House passed a Factory Bill to regulate the conditions of labour in the Cochin State. Now it is only in the fitness of things that we should go a step further and pass this Maternity Benefit Bill as well. I may say that a similar legislation is in force in British India and in some of the progressive States like Mysore. From a letter I had from the Secretary to the Mysore Legislative Council I understand that the Maternity Benefit Bill of that State was read, considered and referred to a Select Committee on 1st July 1936 and it was finally passed on the 25th January 1937.

The Bill that I introduce in this Council is a very modest one. It attempts to provide a very small compensation to be paid to the women workers in factories for a few weeks before and for a few weeks after confinenment.

In my professional experience I have come across several pitiable cases of women workers, factory workers, suffering from uterine heamorrhage and other serious complaints because they had to go to work as early as 20 or 25 days after confinement. These unfortunate women had to go to work so early

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denying themselves sufficent rest after confinement on account of their extreme poverty and perhaps a few annas earned daily by the women is the only source of income to prevent them and their children from starvation. I only ask for a benefit of three annas per day for these unfortunate women although the Madras Act provides 8 annas per day. I feel fully confident that the Hon'ble Members will view this question in a spirit of compassion and social justice and remedy the sad plight of the poor factory workers during the period of their confinement. I am sure that all the Hon'ble Members of this House have had occasion to realise in the sphere of their own personal experience the care and attention bestowed on expectant mothers both before and after confinement.

I may say that maternity benefit legislation is one of those measures which the Royal Commission on Labour who visited India six years ago recommended for adoption throughout the length and breadth of our country. Further, I may also add that the All India Women's Conference which met at Karachi passed a resolution stressing the urgent need for maternity benefit legislation throughout India.

Dr. A. R. Menon *(Pallippuram).*—I wish to support this motion. This is a very serious measure which ought to be got through.

Motion was put and carried.

Secretary to the Council.—The title of the Bill is "the Cochin Maternity Benefit Bill"

Mrs. D'Souza Williams *(Nominated).*—I move that the Bill be referred to a Select Committee consisting of the Government Advocate, the Director of Public Health and Panchayats, Mr. E. F. Norman, Mrs. Meenakshi N. Menon, Dr. A. R. Menon, Mr. T. S. Balarama Ayyar and the mover.

Motion was put and carried.

Mr. President.—The Government Advocate will be the Chairman and the Committee is to report within 2 months.

The Cochin Newspaper Act Repeal Bill.

Mr. E. Ikkanda Warriar *(Urakam).*—Mr. President, Sir, I move that the Cochin Newspaper Act Repeal Bill be read in council.

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